

1 **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

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3 1. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a

4 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, said computer system comprising:

5 a plurality of server computer devices,

6 wherein each server computer device is programmed to perform a plurality of

7 activities in support of a particular function, wherein each server computer device is

8 programmed to support a different particular function, and wherein each particular function

9 contributes to managing shipping of the plurality of parcels.

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11 2. The computer system of Claim 1, said plurality of server computer devices of

12 said computer system further comprising:

13 a first server computer programmed to communicate with each of the plurality of

14 users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global communications

15 network at one time.

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17 3. The computer system of Claim 2, said plurality of server computer devices of

18 said computer system further comprising:

19 a second server computer programmed to obtain data from at least one system

20 database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a parcel.

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22 4. The computer system of Claim 3, said plurality of server computer devices of

23 said computer system further comprising:

24 a third server computer programmed to use the data obtained for shipping the parcel

25 to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate a second

26 shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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28 5. The computer system of Claim 4, said plurality of server computer devices of

29 said computer system further comprising:

1 a fourth server computer programmed to obtain carrier tracking information from each
2 of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global communications
3 network.

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5 6. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a
6 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein each user accesses the computer
7 system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user
8 client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global
9 communications network, said computer system comprising:

10 a plurality of server computer devices,

11 wherein a first server computer is programmed to communicate with each of the
12 plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global
13 communications network at one time; and

14 wherein a second server computer is programmed to obtain carrier tracking
15 information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global
16 communications network.

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18 7. A computer system for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a
19 plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein each user accesses the computer
20 system over a global communications network using a client computer device, each user
21 client computer device having an individual electronic connection to the global
22 communications network, said computer system comprising:

23 a plurality of server computer devices,

24 wherein a first server computer is programmed to communicate with each of the
25 plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over a global
26 communications network at one time;

27 wherein a second server computer is programmed to obtain data from at least one
28 system database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a
29 parcel; and

1 wherein a third server computer is programmed to use the data obtained for shipping
2 the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate
3 a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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5 8. The computer system of Claim 2 wherein a fourth server computer is
6 programmed to obtain carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier
7 computer systems accessible over the global communications network.

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9 9. A method of configuring a plurality of server computer devices for managing
10 shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, wherein
11 each server computer device is connected to and communicates with at least one other server
12 computer device of the plurality of server computer devices, said method comprising:

13 programming each of the plurality of server computer devices to perform a plurality
14 of activities in support of a particular function, wherein each server computer device is
15 programmed to support a different particular function, and wherein each particular function
16 contributes to managing shipping of the plurality of parcels.

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18 10. The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
19 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
20 carriers, said method further comprising:

21 programming each subset of a plurality of subsets of said server computer devices to
22 support a particular function wherein each subset of server computer devices comprises at
23 least one server computer device.

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25 11. The method of Claim 10 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
26 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
27 carriers, said method further comprising:

28 programming each subset of the plurality of subsets of said server computer devices
29 to support a different particular function than is supported by any other subset of server

1 computer devices.

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3 12. The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
4 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
5 carriers, said method further comprising:

6 programming a first server computer device to communicate with each of the plurality
7 of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global communications
8 network at one time.

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10 13. The method of Claim 12 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
11 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
12 carriers, said method further comprising:

13 programming a second server computer device to obtain data from at least one system
14 database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to ship a parcel.

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16 14. The method of Claim 13 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
17 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
18 carriers, said method further comprising:

19 programming a third server computer device to use the data obtained for shipping the
20 parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to calculate a
21 second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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23 15. The method of Claim 14 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
24 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
25 carriers, said method further comprising:

26 programming a fourth server computer device to obtain carrier tracking information
27 from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global
28 communications network.

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1 16. The method of Claim 9 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
2 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
3 carriers, said method further comprising:

4 programming a first subset of server computer devices to communicate with each of
5 the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications connections over the global
6 communications network at one time.

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8 17. The method of Claim 16 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
9 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
10 carriers, said method further comprising:

11 programming a second subset of server computer devices to obtain data from at least
12 one system database in response to each user input of a request by each particular user to
13 ship a parcel.

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15 18. The method of Claim 17 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
16 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
17 carriers, said method further comprising:

18 programming a third subset of server computer devices to use the data obtained for
19 shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the parcel and to
20 calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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22 20. The method of Claim 19 of configuring a plurality of server computer devices
23 for managing shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of
24 carriers, said method further comprising:

25 programming a fourth subset of server computer devices to obtain carrier tracking
26 information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible over the global
27 communications network.

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1 21. A computer program product embodying computer program instructions for
2 execution by a computer for configuring a plurality of server computer devices for managing
3 shipping of a plurality of parcels by a plurality of users using a plurality of carriers, said
4 computer program product comprising:

5 a set of program instructions instructing each of the plurality of server computer
6 devices to perform a plurality of activities in support of a particular function, wherein the set
7 of program instructions programs each server computer device to support a different
8 particular function, and wherein each particular function contributes to managing shipping of
9 the plurality of parcels.

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11 22. The computer program product of Claim 21, said computer program product
12 further comprising:

13 a set of program instructions instructing each subset of a plurality of subsets of said
14 server computer devices to support a particular function wherein each subset of server
15 computer devices comprises at least one server computer device.

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17 23. The computer program product of Claim 22, said computer program product
18 further comprising:

19 a set of program instructions instructing each subset of the plurality of subsets of said
20 server computer devices to support a different particular function than is supported by any
21 other subset of server computer devices.

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23 24. The computer program product of Claim 23, said computer program product
24 further comprising:

25 a set of program instructions instructing a first server computer device to
26 communicate with each of the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications
27 connections over the global communications network at one time.

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1 25. The computer program product of Claim 24, said computer program product
2 further comprising:

3 a set of program instructions instructing a second server computer device to obtain
4 data from at least one system database in response to each user input of a request by each
5 particular user to ship a parcel.

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7 26. The computer program product of Claim 25, said computer program product
8 further comprising:

9 a set of program instructions instructing a third server computer device to use the data
10 obtained for shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier to ship the
11 parcel and to calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the parcel.

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13 27. The computer program product of Claim 26, said computer program product
14 further comprising:

15 a set of program instructions instructing a fourth server computer device to obtain
16 carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems accessible
17 over the global communications network.

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19 28. The computer program product of Claim 21, said computer program product
20 further comprising:

21 a set of program instructions instructing a first subset of server computer devices to
22 communicate with each of the plurality of users over multiple telecommunications
23 connections over the global communications network at one time.

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25 29. The computer program product of Claim 28, said computer program product
26 further comprising:

27 a set of program instructions instructing a second subset of server computer devices to
28 obtain data from at least one system database in response to each user input of a request by
29 each particular user to ship a parcel.

1 30. The computer program product of Claim 29, said computer program product
2 further comprising:
3 a set of program instructions instructing a third subset of server computer devices to
4 use the data obtained for shipping the parcel to calculate a first shipping rate for a first carrier
5 to ship the parcel and to calculate a second shipping rate for a second carrier to ship the
6 parcel.

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8 31. The computer program product of Claim 30, said computer program product
9 further comprising:
10 a set of program instructions instructing a fourth subset of server computer devices to
11 obtain carrier tracking information from each of a plurality of carrier computer systems
12 accessible over the global communications network.

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